

**¡Más Latinos! Increasing Diversity on Ball State's Campus:
Generating New Recruitment and Retention Strategies for Latino students
Through Focus Groups and Interviews**

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

By

Fay Gammon

Thesis Advisor
Chin-Sook Pak

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C-S Pak', is written over a horizontal line.

Ball State University
Muncie, Indiana

May 2009

Expected Date of Graduation
May 9th, 2009

Abstract

This thesis explores the phenomenon of Hispanic under-education in the United States and the place of social justice in the American public education system. More specifically, this project gives those most qualified to speak on the subject matter—Latino youth—an opportunity to be heard. Undergraduate students from Ball State University were recruited to attend their choice of three focus groups in which the state of diversity on campus, reasons for Hispanic under-education, and ideas for new campus programming to recruit and retain Latino students were discussed. The researcher hopes the results of this study will increase Latino student enrollment at Ball State University and will be a resource to institutions of higher-education working to combat Hispanic under-education nation wide.

Acknowledgements

- ◆ I would like to thank Dr. Chin-Sook Pak for advising me throughout the duration of my honors thesis. At the beginning, her encouragement of my passions and her belief in my abilities called me to take on this project and to stretch myself academically in ways I never had before. In the thick of the project, her positive attitude, steadfast commitment to reaching small goals before big ones, and self-less care for me helped to get me through the toughest times. Now upon completion of this project, it is her character as a whole that I reflect upon. She has taught me by example how to empower people and utilize the strengths of many to reach a common goal and how to be a citizen who works for the betterment of not just herself but her community.
- ◆ Thanks to Dr. Mary Kite, Dr. George Gaither, and Dr. Linh Littleford for being friends in the psychology department whom I could look to for direction while designing the study and submitting it to the Institutional Review Board.
- ◆ To the members of my research team—Brian Main, Daniel Lakes, and Teah Aldred. I would like to thank Brian for his ability to be direct, objective, and task-driven. Brian was instrumental in synthesizing and presenting our results. I would like to thank Daniel for his attention to detail and willingness to complete those behind the scenes tasks that no one sees. Without him we would not have had sound or transcripts. Lastly, I would like to thank Teah for her ability to reach out to people and include them in what we were doing. She was indispensable in recruitment.
- ◆ I would also like to thank the remaining members of Dr. Pak's 390A class—Allison Meyers, Lauren Moss, Brad Bohall, Juliana Abercrombie, Nathan Roach, Sarah McColley, Hannah

Kays, Tony López-Fajardo, and Brent Lyle. Sharing this experience with all of them was a delight, and I commend them for all their hard work.

- ◆ Lastly, special thanks to the students of Latino Student Union. Without their collaboration this project would not have been possible. I appreciate their committed participation and passion for the cause and am humbled to call them my friends.

Table of Contents

I. Abstract.....	2
II. Acknowledgements.....	3
III. Author's Statement.....	5
A. Analysis and Explanation of the Academic Process.....	5
Developing a Vision.....	5
Designing & Preparing.....	7
Implementing & Processing.....	9
Disseminating & Presenting.....	10
B. All I learned from this Experience.....	13
As a Leader.....	13
As a Teammate.....	13
As a Member of a Community.....	14
IV. The Research Project: ¡Más Latinos! Increasing Diversity on Ball State's Campus.....	16
A. Abstract.....	17
B. Introduction.....	18
C. Method.....	22
D. Results.....	26
E. Discussion.....	35
F. References.....	40
G. Appendices	
Appendix I: IRB Document Package.....	41
Appendix II: Complete Transcripts.....	58
Focus Group One Complete Transcript.....	58
Focus Group Two Complete Transcript.....	76
Focus Group Three Complete Transcript.....	89
V. Presentation Materials	
A. Diversity Committee (Outline and Handouts).....	110
B. Latino Student Union (Power Point Slides).....	117
C. Office of Admissions (Presentation Booklet and Power Point Slides).....	120

Author's Statement

Analysis and Explanation of the Academic Process

Developing a Vision. During the spring semester of my junior year, I was enrolled in both Dr. Chin-Sook Pak's "*Mentoring Partnerships for Latino Youth in Pursuit of Higher Education*" honors colloquium and Dr. Mary Kite's "*Psychology of Diversity*" class. I selected both of these classes out of a natural interest in and curiosity about diversity-related issues. While I myself am a white, all-American young woman from a humble, Mid-Western background, my partiality to all things diverse might be explained by my coming from a family of blended races, my experience growing up with a multi-racial best friend, and my dedication to learning the Spanish language that began at the age of twelve. Through the rewarding experience I had mentoring a Mexican-American woman in Dr. Pak's colloquium, and my almost electric interest in the stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination and social justice literature I was required to read in Dr. Kite's class, it became apparent that my academic identity and the work I desired to pursue in the future would be found in the realm of diversity and multicultural issues.

In the fall of my senior year when it came time to decide what type of project I might like to do for my honors thesis, I wanted to be sure to choose something that would incorporate each of my academic concentrations in psychology, interpersonal relations, and Spanish. It was at this same time Dr. Chin-Sook Pak hired me as an undergraduate honors fellow to help her design and implement a new honors colloquium. In the early stages of our class development, we read a myriad of literature addressing the reasons for Hispanic under-education in the United States. We quickly discovered that one primary contributor to the problem is the cultural divide that exists between institutions of higher education staffed by a Caucasian majority and the families of prospective Latino students. Dr. Pak's vision for this class then became geared toward working

closely with the Office of Admissions at Ball State to implement new recruitment and retention strategies for Latino youth.

Dr. Pak and I met with two admissions staff members, Beth Terrell and Chris Munchel, to talk about how our class could collaborate with them and help them work on Latino student enrollment. They expressed a genuine interest in student opinions and wanted to know what draws students to Ball State, what programs they like, and what they would change. In a later discussion of this meeting, Dr. Pak and I brainstormed different ways we could collect student opinions and make the Office of Admissions aware of the specific needs of Latino students. As a psychology major, I had learned about several different methods for collecting data from human participants. While quantitative survey type research is considered more scientifically substantial than qualitative discussion based research, Dr. Pak felt it important not only to elicit the participation of diverse Ball State students but also to encourage the interaction of diverse groups of students.

Out of this discussion, we decided my honors thesis project would be to design, implement, process, and present a research study employing a series of three focus groups as one of the service tasks our class would undertake for the office of admissions. Holding three focus groups seemed appropriate because we had three main topics in mind that we wanted to further explore: the state of diversity on Ball State's campus, reasons for Hispanic under-education, and ideas for new campus programming to recruit and retain Latino students. Not only was I to oversee this class project in every aspect, but I was also responsible for leading a weekly research meeting and delegating tasks related to the project to three other students who had enrolled in the class Dr. Pak and I developed together.

Designing & Preparing. At the beginning of the spring semester, I worked independently to design and prepare for the research study. I had to call upon my knowledge of psychological research methods and my prior experience as a research assistant for Dr. Michael Tagler in the psychology department. The first thing I knew every researcher conducting an experiment with human participants had to do was receive permission to carry out the study from the Institutional Review Board. In the first week of this spring semester, I set up an account on irbnet.org, which is the website Ball State faculty in the psychology department employ to submit their studies electronically and began designing my study. The website advised me on which documents I would need to generate and attach to my study's document package in order to prove my study ethical. The documents I was required to produce included a formal IRB protocol, a human subjects application form, informed consent forms for each of the three focus groups, introductory letters for participants, any fliers used for recruitment, scripts of oral/email invitations used for recruitment, a list of sample questions that would be posed in each focus group discussion, and copies NIH tutorial certificates from each of the members of my research team. The process of writing all these documents was foreign to me and very time-consuming, but the process I underwent to get approval for the study helped me design it down to the last detail.

Once the design for the study was in place, I collaborated more with the members of my research team to begin recruitment efforts. Since the study was voluntary and no incentive was offered, we hypothesized that students would not be likely to participate unless they already displayed a vested interest in diversity issues. We decided to recruit participants from each of the multicultural organizations and from two psychology classes—social psychology and psychology of diversity. After coming up with our strategy for recruitment, I began delegating

tasks to each team member. One was responsible for making fliers to hang up around campus, one for sending emails to all who expresses interest, and one for giving oral invitations at each of the multicultural organizations and swing club. I was responsible for giving the oral invitations in the two psychology classes. At this point, I didn't know the members of my team very well and made only one judgment call as to who should be assigned to each task. The other female member of the team seemed to be outgoing and had previously attended some of the multicultural organizations. Thus, she received the assignment of giving oral invitations to those groups.

It was around this time that I also began attending Latino Student Union (LSU) consistently every week. My diversity-related classes had taught me that when cultivating inter-racial relationships trust-building is key. The more the students of LSU saw me around and interacted with me personally, the more likely they would be to come to our focus groups and be interested in what we were doing. Hispanic/Latino culture is extremely relational, and I knew they would need to interact with me to trust me. I also wanted to get more connected with the multicultural organizations this year to support them and experience them first hand. Being more personally active in pursuing of diversity only made sense when doing a project that calls others to do the same.

Our research team recruited for about two weeks prior to the first focus group meeting. During this time, I also wrote out a schedule for the progression of the meeting, secured a room in Bracken library in which to hold the group, and delegated tasks to each of the team members regarding their roles during the focus group meeting. Since I was set to act as the official discussion leader of each focus group, I needed help making sure all aspects of the meeting ran smoothly. I made one team member responsible for bringing the introductory letters, written

response forms, and demographic questionnaires to the meeting in a campus envelope and distributing the forms to participants upon entrance to the focus group room. Another member was responsible for setting up and maintaining the sound equipment used to record each focus group discussion. The final member was responsible for taking notes about main ideas and recommendations expressed as backup in case the audio-recording failed. In this time of preparation, we also repeatedly went over the questions I planned to pose at the first focus group meeting. We changed wording, grouped certain questions together and devised a master list. Their input in this process was so beneficial. Without good thought-provoking questions, the entire focus group would have been ineffective and fruitless.

Implementing & Processing. After all our preparation, we were ready for to implement focus group one, which went exceedingly well. Ten participants attended, each of the team members executed their tasks flawlessly; discussion was lively and insightful; and we were able to cover all the questions we prepared in almost exactly an hour. The participants complimented us on our initiative to undertake this project and expressed their enjoyment in partaking. Since our first experience could not have gone better, I decided to implement an identical process to recruit for, prepare, and execute focus groups two and three.

The mid-semester stretch of time in which we were administering focus groups was also spent transcribing the audio-recordings of each group. In the week following a focus group, I assigned each team member a fourth of the audio file to transcribe and analyze for significant findings. We were all to come to our next weekly research meeting with enough copies of our part of the transcript for each team member to have for his/her own to reference and an informal presentation of significant findings to share with the group. These presentations allowed for the team to discuss what we collectively deemed significant versus not significant results. In the case

of qualitative research, which is not scientifically substantiated through objective numerical representations of significance, the significance of some result is established as the number of individuals who agree upon its significance increases.

Disseminating and Presenting. Taking the time to transcribe each focus group discussion and to highlight significant material equipped us well for the final step of the process: presenting the results. The results of our focus group study were disseminated to several different audiences in the form of a formal research report, presentations, and brief handouts. The formal research report was my work alone. To write it, I again had to call on my knowledge of psychological research methods. I had written two complete “mock” research reports for psychology classes prior to writing this report in which I used already existing data to compile the reports. Never have I written a complete research report with real data that I collected. It is always good practice for an aspiring psychologist to write full-length research reports, and I much enjoyed the exercise.

The most difficult part of the writing process was deciding how to organize the results. Because I don’t have much of a background in qualitative methods, knowing how to make sense of things without the help of statistical analysis was challenging. I made the decision to match each significant finding to the theme of the focus group with which it best corresponded even if it did not necessarily come from that focus group transcript and even if some findings were reiterated over the course of more than one focus group. This structure seemed the most logical and the most functional. In the future, it is my hope for the research report component to be published in a peer-reviewed academic journal and to be instrumental for other institutions of higher education with the goal of recruiting and retaining greater numbers of Latino students.

For the presentation component of dissemination, I worked more closely with my teammates. Our first presentation of the results was to the Ball State Diversity Committee. For this presentation, I devised a written outline for all presenters to follow while giving the presentation and two handouts. The first handout was a compilation of student quotes expressing their views on the state of diversity on Ball State's campus, and the second handout was a compilation of student recommendations to Ball State University about the improvement of existing services for minority students and the implementation of new initiatives to specifically attract Latino students to the campus. Our presentation to this group was well received, and the Diversity Committee decided to include our list of recommendations in the appendices of their 2008-2009 annual report to the Board of the Trustees to the University.

Our second presentation was to the executive board and members of Latino Student Union (LSU). Since their consistent participation throughout the focus group process made the entire project possible, we wanted to share the findings with them. Two of my teammates presented to the members of the Latino Student Union executive board at their weekly Monday evening meeting, and I presented to the members of LSU the following Wednesday at their organizational meeting. For this presentation, I wanted to present the results in a compelling way that would keep the attention of a large group and in an informal tone as to not overwhelm them with complex terminology. My goal was that the results be informative yet relatable.

To ensure students' access to the results even after my presentation was over, each received a copy of the two handouts I had made for the Diversity Committee. Having LSU students read aloud some of the student quotes about diversity made sharing the results of focus group one more interactive and served as a way to keep their interest. When presenting the results of focus group two, I used short slang-type phrases to keep the tone casual. I wanted

students to be able to see themselves in each situation. Finally for focus group three, I chose to share only those recommendations I thought LSU could be a part of bringing to fruition. Spending more time on these particular recommendations and talking through how they could be implemented will hopefully allow them to remain in students' memories for next year when the time to create new programs arises. This presentation was also well received. I even had one student ask me to email her a copy of each of the handouts so she could share it at her student government meeting the following week.

The final way we disseminated our results was by giving a presentation to the Ball State Office of Admissions. This presentation involved the entire class and included the results of all our service projects. Developing the format vision for this presentation required a great deal of collaboration between the members of our entire class. It was not easy to synthesize the results of six service projects into an effect forty-five minute presentation. Under the leadership another classmate, we worked together to create a presentation that told a story, that was packed with enlightening information, and that, in my opinion, had a great deal of heart.

While I was responsible for presenting the same results I had presented twice before to the Diversity Committee and to LSU, the way I presented them and which findings I choose to present changed again based on the audience I addressed. A classmate and I worked on formulating new power point slides for my portion of the presentation that organized the information in a similar way to how I organized it in my formal research report. The entire class also decided to compile a small booklet of our results for the admissions officer to have on hand during the presentation and to keep as a reference long after. The creation of this booklet also required my collaboration with yet a different classmate to organize our results so they fit with those of the rest of the class. We presented in a professional manner, and I believe our audience

was impressed with the amount of work we completed and our passion for the cause. They asked great questions at the end of the presentation and seemed genuinely interested in using our results to implement new strategies for recruiting and retaining Latino students.

All I learned from this Experience

As a Leader. In my position as leader of the research team, I learned not only more about what it means to be a good leader, but also more about myself in the role. Being a good leader means knowing when to take charge and when to let go. I have the natural tendency to want to complete tasks on my own in order to ensure they are “well-done” by my standards. The sheer amount of work involved in the completion of this project forced me to delegate. Overtime, I learned about different ways a leader can delegate tasks depending on their purposes. If a leader wishes to complete a task quickly and efficiently, delegating tasks to each team member that utilize their preexisting talents is most effective. However, if a leader wants to challenge and develop the members of their team, delegating tasks that may be counter to what each member is accustomed to is the best. In the end, I learned that being a good leader does not mean taking on a huge task and completing it immaculately by oneself. That is simple. Being a good leader means studying the people you work with and learning how to both motivate and develop their skills. Good leadership involves more than producing a quality piece of work in the end; it involves growing quality people in the process.

As a Teammate. Even though I was a senior member of Dr. Pak’s 390A class and many of the students looked up to me since I had been through a class with Dr. Pak before, I viewed myself as another member of the team. Through our work together, I learned about each of my classmate’s strengths and “blind spots,” as Dr. Pak would say. By the end of our class when we were collaborating to format our final presentation for the Office of Admissions, we were

working more like a well-oiled machine than a group of students from different backgrounds and areas of study. Certain team members stepped up when they knew their skills would be needed and certain team members backed off when they knew someone else had a task under control. For example, I volunteered myself as a speaker for the presentation because I know I have a natural talent for oral communication, while another teammate, who is a graphic design major, volunteered herself to format the booklet we distributed to key admissions officers attending the presentation. Preparing the presentation for the Office of Admissions again drove home the reality that I cannot always do a task as well on my own as I could in collaboration with others. When people believe they have to do everything flawlessly by themselves, they not only isolate themselves from others, but also put a great deal of pressure on themselves to be perfect. Working together promotes unity, lets them know that they do not have to rely solely upon themselves, and makes people feel like valuable members of a community.

As a Member of the Community. This experience taught me that as an able citizen and member of society, I have a social responsibility to contribute to my community and to help its members. I have the resources and education to be a leader and affect change. I have found community work to be both easy and hard. It is hard in that it takes a lot of time, dedication, and organization to motivate a great number of people and mobilize them toward the same goal. At the same time, community work is easy because it is a joy to work with people. I have loved my experiences collaborating with students from Latino Student Union, the members of my research team, and all my classmates in Dr. Pak's 390A colloquium. I am delighted to call many of them my close friends. Because I invested myself whole-heartedly in this project, it was not just about Latino youth and higher education, it was about learning how to be a member of a community who leads and takes action toward change. Leo Tolstoy once said, "Everybody thinks of

changing humanity and nobody thinks of changing himself.” After completing this project, I have learned that the first place to start if I want to make a difference is with myself.

¡Más Latinos! Increasing Diversity on Ball State's Campus:
Generating New Recruitment and Retention Strategies for Latino students
Through Focus Groups and Interviews

Fay Gammon

Ball State University

Abstract

The current study explored the state of diversity on Ball State's campus, reasons for Hispanic under-education, and ideas for new campus programming to recruit and retain Latino students. Participants were 19 undergraduate Ball State students ranging in age from 19 to 23 years of age. Participants voluntarily attended focus group meetings in which a battery of questions was posed. Participants were pleased with the university's prior efforts to improve diversity, but expressed a desire for efforts to continue. Lack of role models, insufficient funds, immigration status, and strong familial ties were reasons for Hispanic under-education. Services for Spanish-speaking parents and shadowing programs were among student ideas for improved recruitment and retention of Latino students at Ball State University.

¡Más Latinos! Increasing Diversity on Ball State's Campus

In July 2006, the United States Census Bureau estimated there were over 44 million (14.8%) people of Hispanic descent living in the United States, making Hispanics the largest minority group in the country (U.S. Census, 2006). Of that 44 million, 299, 398 (4.7%) Hispanics are estimated to live in the state of Indiana (Indiana, 2006). While the number of Hispanics in the United States continues to rise, a meager 8.4% have continued on to earn bachelor's degrees at the college level (Hispanic, 2006). This number is drastically lower than that of their Caucasian counterparts with 18% of Caucasians over the age of twenty-five earning bachelor's degrees (Not Hispanic, 2006). In the state of Indiana in 2002, only 3% of students enrolled in undergraduate programs were Hispanic and only 2% of students awarded college degrees at any level were Hispanic (Excelencia, 2005). At Ball State University, of the 20, 243 students enrolled for the 2008-2009 school year, only 392 (1.9%) of those students were of Hispanic/Latino descent (Fact Book, 2008).

Ball State University and institutions of higher education across the United States face the challenge of increasing minority student enrollment. Because the majority of colleges and universities across the country serve and are staffed by the Caucasian majority, a cultural divide exists between institutions and the families of prospective minority students. The purpose of the present study is to overcome the cultural divide that exists specifically between Ball State University and the families of prospective Latino students by:

- 1) assessing the current state of diversity on Ball State's campus,
- 2) identifying the cultural differences between Latino and majority culture that make it more challenging for Latino students to enroll and remain in college, and

3) generating specific ideas for creating culturally sensitive and effective recruitment and retention strategies for Latino students.

Our first research goal is to assess the state of diversity on Ball State's campus. No previous studies have been performed at Ball State University to examine students' opinions on the state of diversity on campus and whether they are pleased with the institution's efforts to improve it. The current study employs a focus group design and explores issues similar to those investigated in a study called, "Student perceptions of diversity on a college campus: Scratching the surface to find more." (Brunner, 2006). In Brunner, the researcher held a series of eight focus groups at a large Southeastern university to find out what the term "diversity" meant to students, what they thought its place was on a college campus, and whether they thought their institution was succeeding in creating a more diverse community of students. Forty-eight students recruited from the department of communication and journalism participated in the focus group series.

Brunner (2006) found that students from all racial groups examined in the study viewed diversity as something positive. They believed that their university was working to improve diversity on campus; however, not all students believed the university was doing everything in its power. Students expressed that while they could see diversity on their campus, they could not feel it. It was possible to see the outcomes of the university's diversity programming in that they saw diversity among their classmates and as they walked across campus, but they could not feel diversity because these groups never interacted. Most student suggestions from Brunner regarding the improvement of "feeling" diversity on campus had to do with changes one could make on the individual level like going to see speakers hosted by diversity programs, getting involved in multicultural campus organizations, and traveling. The present research aims to take the findings of Brunner (2006) one step further by collecting student opinions about how the

institution might encourage students to take advantage of the multicultural services it already provides and student ideas for new programming that might facilitate increased interaction among diverse groups of students.

Our second research goal—to identify the cultural differences between Latino and majority culture that make it more challenging for Latino students to enroll and remain in college—has been addressed in a myriad of academic journals and mainstream publications. One article of note among the many on this topic which does well to sum up the challenges Latino youth face during the college process is entitled “The Unspoken Reasons for Hispanic Under-education” (Sosa, 2002). In his article, researcher Lionel Sosa describes his leading a study group at Harvard’s John F. Kennedy School of Government to explore the unspoken causes of Hispanic under-education. The group concluded that there are four distinct issues contributing to the problem: poverty and family, fear of the unknown, low expectations, and unawareness.

First, the study group found that many Hispanic youth do not continue on into higher education because of the influence of their families. From a young age, parents impress upon their children the tightly held cultural value that working hard to provide for your family is more honorable than educating oneself. Since the majority of Hispanic families are living at or below the poverty line, Hispanic youth begin working at a young age to help their families out of necessity. Another factor contributing to the problem is that many parents have not been to college themselves. They lack the knowledge to be able to guide their children through the process and stay uninvolved in the academic lives of their children because their unfamiliarity with the school system make it uncomfortable to get involved. Finally, because Hispanic parents are so unfamiliar with the way American schools operate, many jump to the immediate conclusion that college is not affordable and therefore is not an option for their children.

The study group's second conclusion was that fear of the unknown kept Hispanic youth from higher education. The road to high academic achievement is one that few Hispanics have ventured down, and Hispanic youth are highly aware of that fact. They look around and see what Sosa's students called "idol" rolemodels like Jennifer Lopez and Enrique Iglesias while high-profile Latinos in business, politics, and other leadership positions are hard to come by. For many Hispanic youth, the fear of not fitting in and being discriminated against for their race becomes more salient in an unfamiliar environment like college.

Third, the study group reported low-expectations for Latino youth as a contributing factor to their under-education. Hispanic culture tends to have a lower definition of success than the rest of mainstream American culture. Hard work is what is important in Latino culture not promotions and pay raises. Many feel that blue-collar hard work is satisfying and honorable work and that they do not need to obtain anything higher. Few Hispanic youth have the opportunity to travel far from home, so going away to college far away from their families can be a very intimidating step. Hispanic parents also tend to fear their children leaving home, which in turn makes separating Latino youth from their families and getting them into college more difficult.

Finally, the study group discussed the issue of unawareness among Latino youth and their families. Many are unaware that one's level of education determines the level of salary one is able to earn, and therefore do not understand the affect of holding a higher-level degree can have on one's financial situation. Hispanic youth and their families are unaware of the scholarship opportunities available to help them pay for college, they do not know where to go for help within the system when they have questions about the process, and they are unfamiliar with which classes are the best to take to prepare for college. The problem of Hispanic under-

education is complicated and multi-faceted, but it is clear that fear and unawareness are two of the major contributing factors.

Overall, the present study aims to increase the rates of minority student enrollment and retention at Ball State University. Thus, the third goal of our research is to generate specific ideas for creating culturally sensitive and effective recruitment and retention strategies for Latino students. It is our hope that the new initiatives generated from the results of this research will enable the Office of Admission to reach the goal set out in the Ball State University Strategic Plan of 15 % minority enrollment by 2012 (Education, 2007). It was stated above that a cultural divide exists between the families of prospective minority students and the institutions of higher education that attempt to serve them. We hypothesize that the students of Ball State University will be able to offer meaningful insights about our present situation in regards to diversity and be able to suggest new initiatives for its improvement.

Method

Participants

Focus Group One. Because the aim of focus group one was to collect data about the student opinion of the state of diversity on Ball State's campus, participation was open to students of all races and all ethnicities. To recruit participants, the researchers attended several official meetings of Ball State University's multicultural organizations (Latino Student Union, Asian American Student Association etc.) and psychology of diversity and social psychology classes and orally invited students to attend the first focus group and passed around a sign-up sheet for interested students to write down their names and email addresses. Working from that list, the researchers then sent personalized emails to each interested student further explaining the

details of the study and also its location and time. The researchers also posted fliers in various locations on Ball State's campus publicizing the event. Eleven undergraduate Ball State students attended focus group one; however, one participant's contributions were removed from the study due to the participant's being under eighteen years of age. The final sample was made up of 10 participants.

Participants ranged in age from 19 to 23 years of age (4 were 19; 3 were 20; 2 were 21; 1 was 23 years of age). Five participants were male, and five were female. One participant was a freshman, four were sophomores, four were juniors, and one was a senior in college. Five participants (three males; two females) reported their race/ethnicity as Hispanic/Latino (American), one participant reported his race as Asian (American), one participant reported his race as Black/African (American), one participant reported her race as Caucasian/European (American), one participant reported her race as Middle Eastern (American), and one participant reported her race as Hispanic/Latino, Caucasian/European, and Middle Eastern (American).

Focus Group Two. The theme of focus group two theme was the cultural differences between Latino and majority culture that make it more challenging for Latino students to enroll and remain in college, thus participation in focus group two was open only to individuals of Hispanic/Latino descent and individuals who had either lived and/or working within the Latino community who could speak on behalf of the culture. Participants for focus group two were recruited through oral invitations given at meetings of Ball State's Latino Student Union (LSU) over the course of several weeks. Interested LSU members were asked to write their names and email addresses on a sign up sheet that was passed around at each meeting, and the researchers later sent each a personalized email explaining the details of the study and also its location and time. Participants for focus group two were three male Ball State University undergraduate

students who reported their race/ethnicity as Hispanic/Latino (American). Participants ranged in age from 19 to 23 years of age (2 were 19; 1 was 23 years of age). Two participants were sophomores, and one was a senior in college.

Focus Group Three. The final focus group was devoted to discussing new recruitment and retention practices that could be implemented at Ball State's campus to improve the recruitment and retention of Latino students; therefore, participation in this group was limited to individuals of Hispanic/Latino descent and individuals who had either lived and/or working within the Latino community who could speak on behalf of the culture. Recruitment for focus group three was executed exactly as it was for focus group two. Participants were seven undergraduate Ball State University students. One participant's contributions were removed from the study due to the participant's being under eighteen years of age. As a result, the sample consisted of six participants. Participants ranged in age from 19 to 23 years of age (3 were 19; 1 was 21; 1 was 22; and 1 was 23 years of age). Five participants were male, and one was female. One participant was a freshman, two were sophomores, one was a junior, and two were seniors in college. All five male participants reported their race/ethnicity as Hispanic/Latino (American), and the sole female participant reported her race/ethnicity as both Hispanic/Latino (American and Caucasian/European (American)).

Materials

Materials included an introductory letter, a demographic form, and a form entitled, "Written Response Form." The introductory letter thanked participants for their interest in the study and for their willingness to participate, outlined the purpose of the study and plans for the dissemination of the results, explained that the focus group session would be audio-recorded, and assured participants that they would experience no foreseeable risk by participating. Participants

were also informed through means of the introductory letter that their participation was voluntary and could be withdrawn at anytime. The demographic form inquired after the age, gender, class year in college, and race/ethnicity of participants. The “Written Response Form” listed all the questions that would be asked during the course of the focus group discussion and provided a space for participants to write down any responses that time did not permit them to share or that they were merely uncomfortable sharing aloud with the group. Materials implemented in audio-recording each focus group session included an Apple iBook G4 laptop computer equipped with the program “Garage Band” and a portable microphone.

Procedure

Upon entering the designated focus group room (FG1=Forum room; FG2=Bracken 201; FG3=Bracken Classroom 2), participants were given a stapled packet containing the introductory letter, the demographic form, and the written response form. Once all participants had arrived and were seated, the discussion leader thanked all in attendance for their willingness to participate, read the introductory letter aloud, and explained the purpose of the written response forms and that all materials from the packet, save the introductory, letter would be collected at the end of the focus group. The discussion leader then posed to participants a series of discussion questions to which they were encouraged to freely respond. Participants were given appropriate time to form thoughts and reply to each question. However, not every participant was required to give a response to every question. Each focus group discussion lasted approximately one hour. Once time had elapsed, the discussion leader thanked all participants for their time, a key personnel member collected the written response and demographic forms, and the group was dismissed.

Results

Data Analysis

While all three focus groups and their proposed questions revolved around one previously agreed upon central theme for each group, many of the student responses and their underlying themes tended to overlap. Therefore, student responses are not compiled chronologically by focus group, but rather by relation to the theme they address. The results listed under each thematic heading may be pulled from the transcript of only one focus group or from all three. The four key researchers analyzed and agreed upon all data included in this final compilation of the findings. The following sections report overall themes presented throughout the course of the focus group series, and student quotations taken directly from focus group transcripts reflecting those themes. In some cases, student quotations were paraphrased to make certain points more readily understood.

The State of Diversity on Ball State's Campus

Overall, students are pleased with the university's efforts to improve diversity but still recognize that there is more work to be done. While they commend Ball State for the already existing multicultural organizations and services for minority students, promotion of these organizations and services still seems to be an issue. One student expressed the specific desire for the Office of Admissions to be more culturally aware and better equipped to deal with diverse students' needs.

- "I think Ball State has actually been a really big supporter of diversity recently. I stepped foot on campus in 2004 and since then, the amount of diverse students that I have seen with different backgrounds has increased so much. Just being able to walk down McKinley and think that you're the only minority on campus to at least seeing some other minorities. We've come a long way as far as diversity is concerned.
- "I also think the way the university is funding organizations such as LSU, BSA, AASA, Spectrum, and even the multicultural center...that alone shows the importance they put on diversity."

- “I think that there needs to be more effort still. They are doing a good job. It is a good start, but there is still a long race ahead of you.”
- “We are happy where it is right now, but that is with the expectation that the outreach is going to increase.”
- “A lot of people don’t even know we have LSU.
- “I’m a freshman, and I didn’t even know about LSU.”
- “I didn’t actually join LSU until after two years of college. I wasn’t really aware of it.”
- “Orientation was when I heard about LSU and BSA and everything. They didn’t bring Ball State up there. The only thing you heard about was architecture, TCOMM, and nursing. So unless you were really interested in those things, it was like, ‘Oh, I’ll go to Purdue or I’ll stay home.’”
- “As a new student to the campus, I think that the diversity is pretty good, but they should not focus on just bringing people. They should focus on getting to know these people and their backgrounds, because they are bringing many people from all over the world, but sometimes the people in admissions don’t understand where we are coming from and issues that we are bringing with us.”

When asked how big a factor diversity was in their choosing to attend Ball State

University, students reported that they did not come here because they heard about the multiculturalism. They enrolled because of the majors offered like nursing and architecture.

Although diversity did not bring them to Ball State’s campus, many students expressed that in moments when they wanted to quit school or transfer, it was diversity and the friends they’d made through the multicultural organizations that made them stay.

- “I only came here for architecture. I didn’t really consider the multiculturalism. If it wasn’t for architecture, I wouldn’t have come.”
- “I wanted to go to school that was more diverse, but everything else brought me here like the traveling abroad opportunities, the nursing program, the campus itself was beautiful the middle-sized school. All that brought me here, but I was debating whether or not I wanted to come here because of that issue—diversity...That’s one thing that kind of made me think twice.”
- “I don’t know if I’d still be here without a lot of these people [LSU members]. I probably would have transferred way closer to home. I hate living this far.”
- “After I left architecture, I had a big decision—was I going to stick around knowing that I hated it...this university was too small for me. I just wanted a bigger city and more people and a bigger community...I sat down and actually evaluated all my friendships, and I actually realized how good I had it here. And I’m so glad I didn’t transfer. After that second year, my conflict year, it was like am I going to leave, am I going to transfer to IU, or am I going to stick around? And I don’t regret not transferring. I am so glad I am here right now.”

- “Even if diversity wasn’t a major factor in their choosing to come here, it would have helped. That would have been a major selling point to everybody if Ball State had been known for its diversity.”

Students believe increasing the recruitment and retention of minority students is in the best interest of Ball State University and is important to their personal, educational, and professional development.

- “Latinos are now the largest minority in the United States, so it makes sense for the university to be focusing more on getting that new minority. [As the Latino population increases,] to have an already established base and to have been working with students of Latino origin/descent makes sense business-wise for the university.”
- “I think that diversity is very important on college campuses because somebody might have grown up in an all white town or in an all black town, and that’s all they know. So when you come to a college campus, you need those different viewpoints...to make yourself a more well-rounded person.”
- “It [diversity] exposes people to other different kinds of people, and it prepares them to be exposed to people in the real world—not just college.”
- “As we are moving toward more globalization, if you have already met people from a lot of different cultures, you can understand if you have to work with them later. You can understand where everyone is coming from.”

On a grander societal scale, students expressed that racial stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination are combated by interaction with members of other diverse groups. The university can contribute to the battle against social injustice by providing more opportunities for students to interact with others whose race/ethnicity, gender, sexual-orientation, religion, language, social-class, and ability are different from their own.

- It [Diversity] breaks those stereotypes. For example, some people have the image that a “Mexicano,” “Mexican” is just that person who mows the lawns, just a hardworking person, and the girls...all they are is these sexy Latinas who are all about inducing, and it’s not like that. We do have brains too. So, I believe that we can fix those stereotypes when we are able to see the wider picture.”
- “When you see a person a lot, you usually prejudge them before you know them. So then, when you see them in one of the organizations you go to, you think they are going to act a certain way. But when you really get to know them through one of these organizations, for who they are, that kind of just blows that out of the water...I’ve prejudged people before getting to know them. In these organizations, I’ve met them. I’ve seen the true side of them, and they’re really not the way I thought them to be.”

- “When you are around the diversity, you get to see that there is even diversity within the diversity.”

The Unique Challenges of Latino Students in Pursuit of Higher Education

No Role Models to Show the Way. The majority of the parents of Latino youth today are first generation immigrants. They do not speak English well (if at all), have never been to college themselves, and are generally unaware as to how the American school system works (Sosa, 2002). Latino parents are therefore unable to guide their children down the path of higher education. With no role models, Latino youth are left to figure out for themselves that certain classes will prepare them better for college than others, that they need to take standardized tests like the SAT and ACT before applying for college, and that scholarships and financial aid are available to them if they know how to apply. In addition to the lack of parental role models, there is also a lack of highly educated, public Latino role models for Latino youth to emulate (Sosa, 2002). Ball State students believe that Latino youth need individuals who will inspire them and also guide them down the path of higher education. Increasing the visibility of minority students on campus so that youth might look on them as role models was one idea students suggested to empower Latino youth and encourage them to enroll.

- “They [Latino youth] think that you can just kind of get by with doing the same thing as the rest of your family, I mean they don’t really know how the process works.”
- “Their parents couldn’t really push them, or be say, ‘Look I have been there before, I went to college... this is the process you go through. You should fill out these [financial aid forms] now and you will probably get some help.’”
- “It stems from people just not knowing what is available to them...if there is a really good student, especially if they’re Latino, they can get really good scholarships, but they just don’t know about it.”
- “They just need somebody to tell them about the opportunities and tell them what’s out there, what they can take advantage of and that they can go to college.”
- “I think that it is important for there to be diversity on a college campus because with more diversity, people of those diverse groups will see that it is okay to come to college and that they can do it too.”

Being Undocumented & Paying for College. Ball State students recognize that because so many Latino youth come from low socio-economic backgrounds, financing college tends to be one of the most challenging barriers to overcome. For those who are legal citizens and who know how to apply, scholarships and federal grants are available. However, as stated above, few Latino high students know about which scholarships are available and how to go about applying. If students are undocumented, as in they are not naturalized citizens of the United States, they are ineligible to receive financial aid from the government and many of the scholarships available for minority students. In addition, to be illegal means to be not technically living in any state of the union. Undocumented students are often required to pay out-of-state tuition which is infinitely more expensive than in-state. Paying for college is an almost insurmountable barrier for Latino youth who experience the concurrent issues of being undocumented and being born into low socio-economic conditions. One student had the idea to implement a work-study program for undocumented students who are ineligible for federal aid.

- “When there is a working class family, and they are struggling just to get by, or if they don’t have a lot of extra money, then really it [college] is not an option.”
- “High school students are coming through, and they are already seeing all of these doors blocked off for them because they don’t have papers, and they don’t realize that they can actually go to college...They just cut themselves short right off the bat.”
- “One of my friends, he’s illegal, and it’s really hard for him to go to any university because it has to come out of his money. He’s not able to apply for any scholarships or get any financial aid...I always thought that if you were illegal, you were not going to be accepted into a university. The thing is, you’re still accepted, you just have to pay for everything, so you’re not financially supported.”
- “What about a work-study kind of thing where they [undocumented students] are going to school, but they also are working on campus.”

Strong Familial Ties & Feeling Like an Outsider. Ball State students explain that the foundation of Latino culture is the family unit. Because of this cultural aspect, Latino parents are very protective of their children and are hesitant to let their children go away to college.

Therefore, a key to recruitment is making parents feel more at ease when letting their children go off to college. They need to know their children will be safe and well taken care of even far from home. Leaving the security of the family unit can be difficult the Latino students when they come to college Many Ball State students express concern about Ball State being so far from home and intense feelings of homesickness. Therefore, a key to retention is getting Latino students connected with a support system at the university as soon as possible.

- “Usually, most Latino families are very close-knit, and a lot of them have the tendency to stay closer to home. The idea of going away to college kind of goes against the grain because most families all reside in the same area.”
- “A lot of people said that their parents were kind of hesitant to let their kids go there [to college], and I’m sure that there are some parents who have actually talked their kids out of it, so maybe targeting the parents. Let the parents know how well their kids will be taken care of.”
- “You have to make the family feel comfortable with it. To them know that they [their children] are not going to be alone when they get here.”
- “I hate living this far, so I think it’s a lot about finding that group that you can relate to...without it, I don’t know if I’d still be here.”
- “If you are going to battle issues with Latino students dropping out, which there is a big problem with that, you need to make sure they feel comfortable in their own skin once they get to college campuses. I know with LSU, several people have talk to me and said, ‘I probably would have dropped out if it weren’t for you guys...they just need something to ground them to the university, so they feel like that are part of it and not and not an outsider.’”

Oral vs. Text-Based Preference in Communication Media. Latinos prefer oral

communication to written documents and pamphlets. Because they are so relational, Latinos want to talk, see, and experience. Ball State students suggest commercials broadcast on Spanish-speaking television stations as one possible way to advertise Ball State to the Latino community.

- “I would recommend using commercials just because you are seeing the campus and saying, ‘I could see myself there.’ As opposed to reading, ‘We have the Latino Student Union,’ you could see the Latino Student Union doing stuff.”

- “Maybe you could have a specific commercial based completely in Spanish and target it to one the major Spanish-speaking [networks].

Student Suggestions for Improving the Recruitment and Retention of Latino Students

In light of Latino Ball State students’ dual knowledge of both university programming and the needs of the Latino community, the following are recommendations for the improvement of already existing services and suggestions for new initiatives to be implemented at Ball State University. These recommendations/suggestions are paraphrased directly from student quotations documented in the focus group transcripts and are organized in thematic categories for reader convenience.

Recruitment Techniques and the Admissions Process

1. Hire an individual in the office of admissions to specifically deal with the needs Latino community (would be bilingual).
 2. Recruit Latino high school students in specific Latino communities by sending bilingual representatives to speak to both students and parents.
 3. Implement a program for high school students to shadow Ball State students and experience a typical college day during the school year.
 4. Set up Ball State offices in northwest Indiana.
 5. Diversify orientation leaders and train them to know multicultural services.
 6. Offer Campus tours in Spanish (already done at IUPUI).
 7. Establish a policy for reaching out to *all* students, regardless of citizenship status (e.g., policy for admission of undocumented students).
- “There needs to be some person that could be there to answer any questions of anyone, who possible can’t speak English or maybe, if the parents have questions.”
 - “If Ball State targeted minority high school students more—junior and senior kids—bring them over and have them witness the different organizations we offer them. Take them out to eat. Not only show them the organizations, but school life. Have them meet up with students—the regular day for a student here at Ball State.”
 - “Up in the region [northwest Indiana] you don’t get a lot of stuff from Ball State. Because I know Merrillville, they just didn’t have anything. It was all Purdue and IU. They don’t have scouts there from Ball State.”
 - “Maybe the orientation leaders, they should get more people who are more diverse so that when we come or when future freshmen come, they see they’re not the only ones.”
 - “Just hardcore promote campus tours in Spanish.. just put it out there in case anybody else does want it.”

Services for Parents: Addressing the Language Barrier

1. Offer to provide a bilingual translator at freshman orientation to field parental questions or sheet in Spanish w/ main points of the discussion.
 2. Offer documents in Spanish (e.g. Introduction/Housing brochures...etc.)
 3. Hold a session for Latino parents at select orientations to improve the Latino familial connection to the university (have a translator present)
- A student describing his Spanish-speaking parents' experience at freshman orientation: "They didn't really know what was going on...They were really isolated even if they were in a group...if they could have a Latino parents get-together, not necessarily where all day they are together, but only for an hour or so...[that might be helpful]."
 - "It would have been nice if she [student's mother] would have had somebody to talk to in Spanish because she doesn't speak English. She was really curious, and she was asking me all these questions..."
 - A National Hispanic Scholar talking receiving his award letter: "It wasn't in Spanish. There were some colleges that sent it out in Spanish...I guess that could be something useful. If they know it's for Hispanics, just send them a letter in Spanish."

Improvements in Advertising and Promotion of Services

1. Market Ball State as a community-oriented institution aimed at developing well rounded individuals who value not only education, but also community
 2. Address the Latino community visual communication (photographs/commercials) in addition to text-based resources.
 3. Commercial for BSU to play on Spanish television/radio networks (possible student project)
 4. Promote the three events the Multicultural Assistants are required to put on every semester
 5. Publicize scholarships marketed solely for Latinos (possibly with the aid of current National Hispanic Scholars on campus)
 6. Add statement on all Ball State advertising promoting our Spanish-speaking services
 7. Restructure activities fair by:
 - a) Highlighting different organizations at the activities fair at different times though out the day
 - b) Providing a map at the activities fair showing where each booth is located
 - c) Separating organizations on the concourse according to type (e.g. multicultural organizations, sports clubs, Greek organizations, etc.)
- "I would recommend using commercials just because you are seeing the campus and saying, 'I could see myself there.' As opposed to reading, 'We have the Latino Student Union,' you could see the Latino Student Union doing stuff."
 - "Maybe you could have a specific commercial based completely in Spanish and target it to one the major Spanish-speaking [networks]."
 - "I think the campus should promote their [M.A.'s] events a little bit more, because the M.A.'s do three programs a semester—three large programs—but most people don't hear about it."

- “The only reason I know now [about scholarships for Latino students] is because I work with admissions, and we mention it. I did not know. I wish I knew.”
- Maybe on their brochures and on their advertising, they could add a little statement that says, ‘We have services for Spanish-speaking people.’ Something as simple as that...people could get the idea.”

New Ideas for Retention Programming

1. Devise a new diversity connections program (like freshmen connections) directed by the multicultural assistants during welcome week
 2. Hold an event along McKinley called “The BSU Block Party” featuring multicultural student groups in which students walk from booth to booth meeting group members, eating ethnic food, and dancing.
- “They should have something like freshman connections, but it should be based around diversity that they have to go to during the first week. They should make it part of the freshman welcome week...Maybe making one of them [an M.A. event] required for the freshman to go to. That would be able to utilize the M.A.’s ‘cause that’s their job, so if you utilize them more, then maybe we wouldn’t have to create some big new thing.”
 - “Have you guys ever been to the taste of Chicago by chance? You know how big that is with all those stands?...You bring music and bring food, people come. It could be stands all along McKinley and block it off like a big block party! BSU could be known for that...like, ‘Yeah, that’s the school that has that BSU block party, taste of culture...’
 - “You could set it up down McKinley—LSU has a big area and the BSA has a big area—then people will have to walk through it and be like, ‘Oh, I like that music or I like that food,’ and they can see the organizations in a broader sense.”

Multicultural Center (MC)

1. Build a new MC, centered in campus, which allows for larger groups to meet effectively; unite all student groups into one “Diversity Building” (one central location for MC, Center for International Programs, language department...etc.)
 2. Personalize the name of the MC, perhaps developing it in such a way that it has name recognition, similar to “La Casa” at IU.
 3. Promote the barbecue at MC to freshman at the beginning of the year
- “A lot of people are turned off by the multicultural center. I never wander over there. Honestly, I never have a desire to say, “Hey...let’s go over and see what’s going on over at the multicultural center.” Unless there’s an activity or somebody else is putting on that I have to go over there, but even then, it’s like, ‘Oh, it’s in the multicultural center. It’s going to be crowded.’”
 - “I think we need a better multicultural center. One where we can actually all be together in it...where we actually could hang out because the multicultural center now is too small. We can’t, like LSU for example, cannot comfortably fit our meeting in there. If we do, it in an awkward way and people are facing away from each other and it’s just not, it’s not functional for our purposes. That’s a

huge reason I think we don't use it as much. Another reason we don't use it [MC] as much is 'cause we're not that tied together. We have our own buildings, and if they brought us together, that would kind of facilitate us talking to each other, working with other different programs... We are Student Life and the Multicultural, and it's just hard for us to connect."

- "It needs to be large enough to hold a BSA meeting or an LSU meeting because... we could probably even have it be just a big meeting room like this, and it would be more functional than the Multicultural Center."
- "Going along with that, it'd be more permanent. Because right now, we skip around the Student Center, and if something big comes in, we'll get booted out of our room, and it will be like "Oh, well you're meeting in this tiny room," and we can't all fit... people are standing..."
- "I know they have a big barbecue at the beginning of the year... That's a good time when all the organizations are there, and they [freshmen] can start dipping their toes into some multiculturalism."

Discussion

This research study attempted to collect the opinions and suggestions of current Ball State University students to increase the rates of minority student enrollment and retention at Ball State University. To accomplish this goal, the following three topics were addressed at a series of student focus groups: 1) the current state of diversity on Ball State's campus, 2) the cultural differences between Latino and majority culture that make it more challenging for Latino students to enroll and remain in college, and 3) specific ideas for creating culturally sensitive and effective recruitment and retention strategies for Latino students. Our hypothesis, that Ball State students would be able to offer meaningful insights about our present situation in regards to diversity and be able to suggest new initiatives for its improvement, was supported. The present study collected a myriad of student opinions and suggestions to aid the Ball State Office of Admissions in reaching its goal of 15% minority enrollment by 2012.

Comparisons with Past Research

The findings of the current study are consistent with those of Brunner (2006). Participants in both studies perceive diversity as something positive and believe their universities are working

to improve it on campus. Like the students in Brunner who see diversity but do not “feel” it on their campus, Ball State students believe that merely increasing the number of diverse students who attend the university is not enough to make Ball State’s campus a diverse one. For Ball State students, achieving diversity involves interaction with individuals different from oneself and learning to appreciate their unique cultures. Participants in Brunner (2006) feel that the responsibility to interact with individuals different than oneself is primarily the responsibility of the individual. While one Ball State student asserted that diversity was something that could not be forced but had to happen naturally, students came up with a breadth of ways in which university programming could facilitate the “natural happening” of diversity through increased opportunities for student interaction.

The findings of the current study are also consistent with those of Sosa (2002). First, Ball state students along with Sosa’s cite the lack of sufficient role models as one reason for Hispanic under-education. Participants agree that since most Hispanic parents are new to the United States, cannot yet speak English, and have not attended college themselves, they are not only inhibited when getting involved in their children’s education, but also incapable of advising them about the process one undergoes to enroll and succeed at the university level. Many Ball State students reflected on not having anyone advise them during the college enrollment process and not knowing that financial aid and scholarships were available to them. Because they see the problem, Ball State students were able to come up with several recommendations to encourage parental involvement many of which involve overcoming the language barrier. Educating parents about the process now is likely to increase minority student enrollment in the future.

Second, like the students in Sosa’s study (2002), Ball State students recognize fear of the unknown as a major contributing factor to the problem of Hispanic under-education. A number

of focus group participants state they miss their families, often feel homesick, and wish they could live closer to home. Not only are students uneasy about leaving home, parents also fear their children moving far away to attend school. One student discussed about his inability to talk to his mother about troubles he has while away at school because she would just encourage him to come home. A few Ball State students also recall the specific fear that they would be the only ones of their racial/ethnic group attending the university and that they would be discriminated against for their race upon coming to school. They are adamant that in order to retain new Latino freshman, it is imperative to make them feel connected to the university and part of a community like the one they experience at home with their families.

Strengths and Limitations

Strengths. Strengths of the present study include variability in participant age, class rank, and race/ethnicity. Students ranged in age from 19 to 23 (9 were 19; 3 were 20, 3 were 21, 1 was 22 and 3 were 23), which is impressive considering the selectivity involved in recruiting only college students to participate. In addition, students of every undergraduate class rank were represented. Two were freshmen, eight were sophomores, five were juniors, and four were seniors. Lastly, the study was able to attract at least one participant from every major racial/ethnic group. Thirteen were Hispanic/Latino (American), which was most likely due to the fact that participation in the final two focus groups was open only to individuals of Hispanic/Latino (American) descent and individuals who had either lived and/or working within the Latino community. One participant of Asian (American) descent, one participant of Black/African (American) descent, one participant of European/Caucasian (American) descent, one participant of Middle Eastern (American) descent, and two mixed race participants took part in the study. While only one student represented several of the racial/ethnic groups listed above,

recruiting participation from even one student from each of these groups is significant on an almost entirely European/Caucasian (American) Midwestern university campus.

Limitations. Limitations to the study were sample size, location of participant recruitment, and variability in gender of participants. Because only nineteen participants took part in the focus group discussions and because all nineteen were recruited from the same mid-sized, mid-western public university, the generalizability of the results is fairly minimal. Student responses do not reflect the state of diversity on any other campus but Ball State's, may not reflect the experiences of Latino students at small or large universities, private universities or universities located in different areas of the country, and suggest possible improvements to diversity initiatives relevant only at Ball State University. In addition, the current study had nearly double the number of male participants as female participants (male=13; female=6). Gender may affect the validity of responses and does again limit the generalizability of the results.

More specifically, Focus group one results may not be representative of Ball State's student body at large due to the nature of the individuals who participated. Those who participated did so voluntarily which shows a vested interest in diversity issues, and many were campus leaders for diversity who serve as executive board members from Latino Student Union. Only one participant was of European/Caucasian (American) descent. The responses of this one participant do not sufficiently reflect the views of the entire Caucasian majority. Therefore, results for focus group one might be skewed to reflect that the majority of students at Ball State see diversity as a positive thing and desire for it to increase.

Future Research

Some suggestions for future research include recruiting larger numbers of students of varying ages, genders, races, etc. to participate in like focus group discussion. To ensure a representative sample, it is necessary in future studies to recruit more European/Caucasian (American) participants. Replicating the study at small and large universities, public and private universities, and also universities in a variety of locations all across the country is needed to substantiate the findings of the current research. Also, in the future, it might be best to vary the discussion questions posed to ensure that no facet of Latino student experience is overlooked. While this research sought to specifically discover the cultural differences between Latino and mainstream culture, studies that aim to bridge the cultural divides between other minority cultures and mainstream institutions are still needed to increase minority student enrollment.

References

- Brunner, B.R. (2006). Student perceptions of diversity on a college campus: Scratching the surface to find more. *Intercultural Education*, 17 (3), 311-317.
- Education Redefined Strategic Plan 2007-2012. (2007). Ball State University. Retrieved May 3, 2009, from <http://cms.bsu.edu/~media/01F7025A13EA405F8483653EA6825672.ashx>
- Excelencia in Education (2005). *Indiana latinos in k-16 education 2003-04*. Retrieved April 9, 2009, from <http://www.edexcelencia.org/pdf/IN-factsheet-03-04.pdf>
- Fact Book 2008-09. (2008). Ball State University. Retrieved May 3, 2009, from <http://cms.bsu.edu/About/FactBook/~media/F14F725252AE4E13BBBB38D2286CC812.ashx>
- Sosa, L. (2002). The Unspoken Reason for Hispanic Undereducation. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 1 (1), 88-91.
- U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey (2006). *S0201. Indiana. Selected population profile in the United States: Hispanic or Latino (of any race)*. Retrieved May 3, 2009, from <http://factfinder.census.gov/>
- U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey (2006). *S0201. Selected population profile in the United States: Hispanic or Latino (of any race)*. Retrieved May 3, 2009, from <http://factfinder.census.gov/>
- U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey (2006). *S0201. Selected population profile in the United States: White Alone, Not Hispanic or Latino (of any race)*. Retrieved May 3, 2009, from <http://factfinder.census.gov/>

Appendix I

Select Documents from IRB Document Packet

IRB Narrative

SECTION 1 – TITLE, PURPOSE OF THE STUDY, AND RATIONALE

- 1.1 **Title.** ¡Más Latinos! Increasing Diversity on Ball State's Campus: Generating New Recruitment and Retention Strategies for Latino students through Focus Groups and Interviews
- 1.2 **Purpose of the study.** The purpose of this study is to gather information about Latino culture from Latino Ball State students that might enable the Ball State Office of Admissions to create new strategies for increasing the enrollment and retention of Latino students. We hypothesize that the results of our study will provide the Ball State Office of Admissions with beneficial information for identifying and implementing culturally sensitive practices that serve the Latino community.
- 1.3 **Rationale.** Ball State University and universities across the United States face the challenge of increasing minority student enrollment. Because the majority of colleges and universities across the country serve and are staffed by the Caucasian majority, a cultural divide exists between institutions and the families of prospective minority students. For example, one difference is that the Latino population is accustomed to exchanging information and acquiring knowledge in an oral fashion. This cultural difference, although seemingly minute, may greatly affect the chances of Latino students attending the university if their only exposure to the institution comes in the form of written letters and pamphlets. This research is needed to better inform the Ball State Office of Admissions of these cultural differences to aid them in their efforts to meet the goal of 15 percent minority enrollment by 2012 set out in the Ball State University Strategic Plan. We have consulted with the Ball State Office of Admissions, and they are interested in our results. Our results may also be of interest to institutions across the country facing the challenge of increasing minority student enrollment. No previous studies related to this specific topic have been performed at Ball State University. The current study will employ a similar focus group design and explore the same issues as a study called “Student perceptions of diversity on a college campus: scratching the surface to find more,” conducted at Auburn University (Brunner, 2006)

SECTION 2 – DESCRIPTION OF SUBJECT POPULATION

- 2.1 **Number of subjects.** We anticipate anywhere from 8-15 people will attend each focus group, and around 4-8 supplementary interviews will be conducted with Ball State students who are unable to attend the focus group times and members of the community who have either lived or worked closely with the Latino community.
- 2.2 **Describe the subject population.** Our subject population will consist of both male and female Ball State students who are 18 years old and over. The first focus group will be

open to all Ball State students. The following two focus groups will be open only to Latino Ball State students and students and community members who have lived or worked closely with Latino communities. Interviews will be offered to all Ball State students and individuals who have lived or worked closely with Latino communities

- 2.3 **Describe any specified inclusion/exclusion criteria.** To be included in focus group one, subjects must be college students attending Ball State University and must be at least 18 years of age. For inclusion in focus groups two and three, subjects must be 18 years of age or older, and either be of Latino/Hispanic descent or have lived or worked closely with Latino communities (See Methods). Students from the faculty supervisor's classes will be excluded from the study so that their previous knowledge of the subject matter and their professor's presence at the focus groups will not influence the results of the study.

SECTION 3 – SUBJECT RECRUITMENT

- 3.1 **Describe the method of subject recruitment.** Subjects will be recruited through fliers, emails, and oral invitation. In the weeks before focus group one, the student P.I and key personnel will send out emails, pass out flyers, and give oral invitations to members of Latino Student Union, Ball State multicultural organizations such as BSA, AASA, etc., and Diversity (Psyc 424) and Discrimination and Prejudice (Psyc 325) classes offered at Ball State. In the weeks before focus groups two and three, the student P.I and key personnel will send out emails, pass out flyers, and give oral invitations to members of Latino Student Union only.

SECTION 4 – METHODS AND PROCEDURES

- 4.1 **Describe the methods and procedures to be used.** Participants will be recruited to attend focus groups on the following topics:
- 1) The state of diversity on Ball State's campus
 - 2) The unique challenges for and contributions of Latino students
 - 3) Specific ideas for creating culturally sensitive and effective recruitment and retention strategies for Latino students.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria for focus groups are dependent upon the discussion topic of each focus group. Focus group one is open to Ball State students of all races due to the fact that only Ball State students are capable of discussing the campus climate at the student level and it is beneficial for the research to collect data from all racial groups regarding this matter. Focus groups two and three are open only to Latino Ball State students and students/members of the community who have lived or worked closely with Latino communities because these individuals will be able to best communicate how Latino culture is different from the mainstream and the needs of prospective Latino students.

At the beginning of each focus group, participants will be given an introductory letter, a demographic questionnaire, and a sheet containing the discussion questions that will be posed. Once all are seated, the P.I. will welcome all in attendance, read the introductory

letter aloud, and instruct participants to fill out and pass in their demographic questionnaires. The discussion group leader will collect the demographic questionnaires and put them in a sealed campus envelope. Participants will then be informed that they may write any responses to questions that they do not choose to or are not able to voice during the discussion group time in the space provided on their discussion question sheets. The P. I. and key personnel will proceed to pose a series of discussion questions. Participants will be given appropriate time to form thoughts and reply to each question. However, each participant will not be required to give a response to every question. Each focus group discussion will last approximately 1 hour. Once time has elapsed, the discussion leader will thank all participants for their time, collect discussion question sheets, and dismiss the group.

The proposed dates for each focus group are as follows:

Focus Group One – Wednesday, February 25th, 2009

Focus Group Two – Wednesday, March 4th, 2009

Focus Group Three – Wednesday, March 18th, 2009.

Throughout the course of the data collection period, key personnel and the P.I. will schedule times to individually interview 4-8 Ball State students who were unable to attend the focus group times or individuals who either are of Latino/Hispanic descent or have lived or worked closely with Latino communities. These interview participants will be required to sign an informed consent form, and asked the same set of questions posed to the focus group participants.

SECTION 5 – ANONYMITY/CONFIDENTIALITY OF DATA

5.1 Describe how data will be collected and stored. Each focus group discussion will be audio recorded for data accuracy, and key personnel will be responsible for adapting the audio recordings into typewritten transcriptions. Since all in attendance will be able to identify the individual making each comment/suggestion, participants' verbal responses will not be anonymous during group discussion, however once the initial response has been made and is audio recorded, the identities of all participants will be kept confidential (i.e. participants will not be referred to by name during any subsequent discussions among key personnel pertaining to the focus groups, in any of the typed transcriptions of the focus group dialogue, or in the presentation given to the Ball State Office of Admissions). In sum, participant identity will not be anonymous during the meetings but will be confidential outside of focus group discussion times. Only the P.I., faculty sponsor, and key personnel will have access to the audio files and transcriptions, which will be stored in the office of the faculty sponsor and deleted when the report has been completed and presented.

SECTION 6 – POTENTIAL RISKS AND BENEFITS

- 6.1 Describe the potential risks and discomforts.** This research is of no foreseeable risk to participants. Participants should encounter no more harm or discomfort than they would in everyday life.

6.2 **Describe how the risks will be minimized.** N/A.

6.3 **Describe the potential benefits.** Through comments made during the focus group discussions, participants will be educated about the state of diversity on Ball State's campus, the specific challenges Latino students face when applying and attending college, and how the university plans to better accommodate Latino students seeking higher education. Focus group one (mixed race) will specifically benefit participants in that they will be exposed to a diverse group and have the potential to learn something new through interaction with members of cultures different from their own.

SECTION 7 – SUBJECT INCENTIVES/INDUCEMENTS TO PARTICIPATE

7.1 **Describe any inducements/incentives to participate that will be offered to the subject.** N/A.

SECTION 8 – OTHER FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

8.1 **Describe any financial expense to the subject.** N/A.

8.2 **Describe any provisions for compensation for research-related injury.** N/A.

SECTION 9 – INFORMED CONSENT

9.1 Upon entry to the room in which the focus groups are held, each participant will be handed 2 copies of the informed consent form and asked to carefully read and sign stating that they agree with the terms of the study. They will also be told that if at anytime they do not wish to continue on with the study, they may dismiss themselves.

9.2 N/A.

9.3 A paragraph at the beginning of the informed consent form will be included to explain the purpose of the study, how participant responses will be utilized, and how the participant may contact the P.I. or faculty advisor with further questions regarding the study.

SECTION TEN – ADDITIONAL MATERIALS

10.1 Attachments include: human subjects research application, informed consent form, sample discussion questions, flyers, emails, and a script of the oral invite which will be used during recruitment, and P.I., faculty supervisor and key personnel NIH tutorial certificates.